



PRESS RELEASE

World First in Antwerp: First-Ever Sale of 100% Traceable Artisanal Diamonds from Congo

Unique Belgian-Congolese project 'OrigemA' opens international markets to small-scale miners and guarantees fair prices

Antwerp/Kinshasa, 18 June 2026 – Today, fully traceable, artisanal diamonds from the Democratic Republic of Congo were sold on the international market for the very first time in Antwerp. The diamonds, originating from the Kasai region, are part of OrigemA: a Belgian-Congolese initiative that provides artisanal miners with access to international markets, guarantees fair prices, and supports the livelihoods of more than 3 million people. During this first sale, 103.77 carats of rough diamonds from the project are being offered on the Antwerp market. The OrigemA project is an initiative of AWDC, the umbrella organization of the Antwerp diamond industry, and has been made possible through financial support from the Belgian Federal Public Service Foreign Affairs.

OrigemA officially launched in 2022 as an initiative of AWDC in collaboration with the Ministry of Mines of the Democratic Republic of Congo, the NGO Resolve and technology partner Everledger, with financial support from the Peacebuilding Service of the Belgian Federal Public Service Foreign Affairs. Six mining cooperatives are currently participating in the project, spread across the Tshikapa area in Kasai Province and the Kazumba area in Kasai-Central Province. Altogether, the project directly and indirectly reaches approximately 3 million people in the regions involved.

“Through OrigemA, we primarily wanted to address the challenges faced by artisanal miners in the DRC,” says Karen Rentmeesters, CEO of AWDC, who was also involved in the creation of the project. “Their diamonds generally do not have access to international markets, which means that many cooperatives do not receive the fair price they deserve for their production.”

Belgian Minister of Foreign Affairs Maxime Prévot welcomes the progress made by OrigemA: “Through the Peacebuilding Fund, we invested a total of EUR 200,000 in the project. The fact that the first diamonds are being offered for sale in Antwerp today

marks an important milestone for the project and for the COMIDIANZ cooperative, from which this first parcel of diamonds originates.”

Access to International Markets and Fair Prices

OrigemA breaks with the traditional model under which artisanal miners in the country can only sell their diamonds to one of two officially recognised buyers. Without alternatives, they are dependent on whatever price is offered to them, creating opportunities for undervaluation, corruption and smuggling.

Through a public tender organized by Bonas-Couzyn in Antwerp, the diamonds now gain access to the international market, allowing the participating cooperative to obtain fair and competitive market prices for its diamonds for the first time. Fewer intermediaries also result in higher revenues for the COMIDIANZ cooperative in Kasai. These additional resources are reinvested directly into the community, enabling investments in infrastructure, agriculture, healthcare and education, making diamond mining a tangible driver of local development and prosperity.

Fully Traceable Through Accessible Technology

Using easy-to-operate scanning devices, every diamond is digitally documented immediately after extraction. Each subsequent step in the value chain is then recorded digitally as well, from the mine site in the Congolese Kasai region all the way to the sale in Antwerp.

“To make this possible, we installed Wi-Fi antennas at remote mining sites that until recently had no connectivity whatsoever,” says Karen Rentmeesters of AWDC. “As a result, the cooperatives were able to use a traceability system for the first time and are making history today: they are the first artisanal mining sites in the Democratic Republic of Congo to supply fully traced diamonds to the international market.”

Training Miners and Modernising Mining Sites

In addition, the OrigemA project aims to strengthen cooperatives, both technically and in terms of knowledge and skills.

“In one of the cooperatives, we installed a small dredging unit that improves efficiency and significantly increases mine productivity. We have also trained a total of 450 miners in sustainable and safe mining practices, as well as in less technical topics such as conflict management and how to run a cooperative as a small business,” explains Alidor Mwamba of NGO Resolve, which oversees the project on the ground.

DRC Produces Nearly 70% of the World's Artisanal Diamonds

The Democratic Republic of Congo is the world's largest producer of artisanal diamonds. An estimated 70% of global artisanal diamond production originates from the DRC. Artisanal mining also plays a crucial role within the country itself:

approximately 85% of all Congolese diamond production comes from artisanal mining sites.

This makes initiatives such as OrigemA particularly relevant for the future of the sector and for the many communities that depend on diamond mining for their livelihoods.

OrigemA at a Glance

- Established in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in 2022
- Six local small-scale mining cooperatives participate in the project
- Active in the Tshikapa area (Kasai Province) and the Kazumba area (Kasai-Central Province)
- The livelihoods of 3 million people in the Kasai region are supported by the project
- The first parcel of diamonds originates from the Kamana Ndeke mine (Batshamba village, Tshikapa)
- Mining cooperative: COMIDIANZ
- Volume of the first sale: 103.77 carats of natural diamonds, estimated value: USD 6,000
- First-ever sale of fully traceable, artisanal diamonds from the DRC on the international market
- Diamonds are traced through digitally recorded data points throughout the entire process, from extraction to the final buyer
- The sale takes place through a public tender organised by Antwerp-based tender house Bonas-Couzyn
- Project partners: AWDC, Belgian Federal Public Service Foreign Affairs, Resolve and Everledger